

# New online system for evals set to launch

Army Times, 16 JUNE 2005

## Designed to streamline officer and NCO records

By Jim Tice

TIMES STAFF WRITER

A new system that streamlines the preparation and submission of officer and noncommissioned officer evaluation reports will be launched this fall for more than a million members of the Regular Army, National Guard and Army Reserve.

Transition to an automated record system for evaluations is the first phase of an ambitious five-year plan to sharply reduce the need for paperwork in the day-to-day operations of soldiers and units.

The move will cut paperwork for everything from individual leave requests and emergency data forms to award recommendations, property accountability and report of survey documents and other forms requiring signatures.

There are more than 100,000 different forms servicewide, publishing officials estimate, although a precise number is not available because many are locally designed.

With the new system, named Forms Content Management, officials will be able to standardize forms where appropriate and do a better job of tracking and storing data.

The Army Audit Agency estimates that when Forms Content Management is fully implemented by the end of the decade, it will save \$1.3 billion annually in document processing costs.

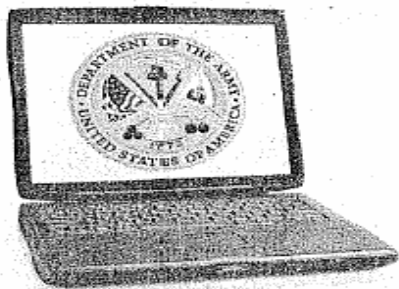
The system also will contribute to personnel transformation, the program for reducing the number of clerks in units through the increased use of automation and Web-based systems.

### Getting the force's attention

In kicking off Forms Content Management with the officer and NCO evaluation systems, officials believe they will catch the attention of the entire force, according to Jeanne Gray-Harman, chief of the publishing division, Army Publishing Directorate.

Next to paychecks and leave and earning statements, the accuracy and timeliness of evaluation reports have high priorities with soldiers because of their importance in the promotion selection system.

Five evaluation system documents will be involved in the first



phase of the transition to an automated records-keeping system:

- The Officer Evaluation Report (DA Form 67-9).

- OER Support Form (DA Form 67-9-1).

- OER Developmental Support Form (DA Form 67-9-1a).

- NCO Evaluation Report (DA Form 2166-8).

- NCO Counseling Checklist and Record (DA Form 2166-8-1).

The launch of Forms Content

Management is made possible by the Army's acceptance of digital signatures, and an access and security system housed behind the Army Knowledge Online portal to the Internet.

For years, the Army has been converting paper documents to digital files that soldiers can tap into online.

However, documents requiring signatures, such as evaluation reports, had to be printed out in hard copy so they can be signed by authenticating officials.

Then, depending on location, reports were mailed or submitted electronically to the appropriate personnel records center in Indianapolis, Alexandria, Va., St. Louis, or state National Guard headquarters.

Evaluation reports can be submitted via e-mail for soldiers in the Middle East combat theater, South Korea and Japan, but they first must be scanned from a signed copy, a process that frequently degrades their visual clarity, according to officials in the Evaluation Systems Office of the Human Resources Command.

Under the new system, reports can be submitted via e-mail without having to be scanned. They also can be printed out and submitted by regular mail when officials do not have Internet access.

The software underlying Form

Content Management uses digital signature technology. Such technology, while it does not require the actual signing of a document (signatures are typed), provides for the validation of a signer's identity and the invalidation of signatures on documents that have been modified.

In addition to the digital signature capability, the software employs an electronic "wizard" that guides the user, such as a rater or senior rater, through the form preparation process, much as commercial tax preparation software, such as TurboTax, assists in preparing tax returns. The latest policies and regulations are embedded in the system, which should reduce preparation errors, according to Jan Swicord, chief of the evaluation systems office, Human Resources Command.

The system can transfer information from the Army's master personnel database. This database, called ITAPDB, is updated daily through a Web-based link with installation and unit personnel offices for the active and reserve components.

Much like TurboTax can transport basic document-preparation data, such as name, address and occupation, from previous tax returns, the Forms Content Management system will enter basic military data on OERs and NCOERs.

Swicord said this capability not only will streamline the form preparation process, but will improve the accuracy of entered data.

Swicord and Maj. Chelsea Ortiz, a co-worker in the Evaluation Systems Office, emphasized that the upcoming changes involve the preparation of evaluation reports, not the content of those reports.

"This is not a major change in the way soldiers are evaluated," Swicord said.

Officials estimate the new system will be activated sometime in September or October.

To prepare for the launch, a new link called "Forms Management" will be activated on the Army Knowledge Online home page in July, according to Jim Aklin, program manager for Enterprise Information Management, prime contractor for the centralized records system.

The link will be in the upper right-hand corner along with links for e-mail, files, forums and chat rooms. □

**Under the new system, reports can be submitted via e-mail without having to be scanned.**